

[Victor R. Scoville]

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Folk stuff - Range lore [113?]

Phipps, Woody

Rangelore

Tarrant Co., Dist. #7

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Victor R. Scoville, 48, was born on his father's ranch. The Cloverleaf, which was located in three adjoining counties, the headquarters being about 54 Mi. S. of San Antonio, Tex. Scoville's ambition as a child, was to emulate the various cowboys on the ranch in riding and roping. Since his father encouraged him in this ambition, he was able to ride a horse at the age of four, and at eight, he was able to perform anything on a horse that didn't require a man's strength. As a large part of a cowboy's work depends on the horse's knowledge and strength, Scoville was able to perform the regular duties of a cowboy. Scoville left the range when he was 18, to work in the various oil booms that occurred in Tex. Whenever possible, he entered various rodeos and won many contests, being a proficient rider. He was mustered out of the World War, a cripple, and now tours the country with a trained mule. He receives his mail at 700 N. Main St., Ft. Worth, Tex. His story:

"I was a cowboy back in the days when they didn't have no fences everywhere you looked. In fact, when I was a kid, they didn't have a fence nowhere near my dad's place. That was 'way back in the 1890's, though. To begin with, I was born on my dad's ranch, on Dec. the

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17th, 1889. The ranch was known as the 'Cloverleaf', and was located in Frio, Zavalla, and LaSalle Counties. Headquarters was in Frio county, about 54 miles South of San Antonio. Dad had over 50,000 head in the 'VA', and 'Cloverleaf' irons. The last iron wasn't really a cloverleaf design but kinda looked like one. It was made with two S's, One of them being a straight S, with the other made in a horizontal way without leaving an opening in the first S.

"I can remember now how anxious I was to be a cow puncher, and how I'd ride everything I could get on 'til I was able to ride anything that run on four feet, and I could get to a snubbing post. C.12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 I rode yearlings 'til I rode 'em down, and I rode every horse I could saddle 'til I really did get good at it for sure. My dad wanted me to be a good rider, so he helped me along by giving me a hoss now and then, and pointing out my faults. When I was four years old, I could ride real good. Of course, I couldn't ride no wild hosses but I had several spills from broncs on frosty mornings when they kinda wanted to stretch out. You take any bronc, and he'll do it in spite of anything you can do. I've seen 'em whipped 'til the blood run, but they'd buck again as if they'd never been whipped for it. regular cow puncher takes that in a day's work and never gets mad about it because he knows the bronc wants to limber up.

"Now, I don't mean to brag when I tell you about riding wild hosses, but some people are born with the knack of handling some things good, and others not a-tall. I reckon if you was to ask me to push a typewriter, I couldn't get to first base in ten years. On the other hand, if you was offered a job wrangling hosses, you might do the same as I would in pushing a typewriter. Of course, you can't never tell about those things but I do know that few people can handle hosses as well as some can.

"Now, about wild hosses, why, I was riding 'em when I was eight years old, and my dad would bet money that I could ride any hoss anywhere. Tell you another thing. I was never th'owed after I was eight years old. I rode in rodeos, too. Rode man killers that had already [killed?] several men. One of 'em I rode was named 'North Fork Blue'. He killed six or seven men before I got the chance to ride him at the [?] Nevada Rodeo, in 1915. rode that

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hoss and won the content. Well the papers told about the men he'd 3 killed and said that I was the only man that ever rode him. I know he was a bad hoss because a couple of cow punchers told me about what the hoss had done before. I didn't care much, but I was extra careful.

“The reason I was able to put on such a good show for them in the rodeos was because I was always picking out bad actors on the home ranch. I had hosses to fall on me, roped critters from green hosses and had 'em jerked out from under me, and roped critters too big for my hoss to hold. Speaking of roping big critters, I roped a 1,000 pound steer in a rodeo at Falfurias, Texas, in 16 seconds flat. That was in 1904.

“That same year, two famous hoss riders put up a bet that each one could best the other. It was Clay McGonigal, and Eddie McCarrol. They put up \$5,000.00, with the winner to take the entire gate too. It come off at the Fall Park in San Antonio. Dad took me with him into San Antonio, and let me stay to see the whole thing. It was to last four days, and plenty people come out to see it.

The first day, Clay's roping hoss bucked, and lost that day for him. The second day the same, so I went to him and asked him to use my hoss. I had a good one. One that I'd trained myself. He told me to bring him out for a trial, so the next morning, bright and early, I was there. I says, 'Clay, let me show you what he can do without the bridle on him'.

“He says, 'Strut your stuff'. I took the bridle off, pointed the critter out to the hoss, and we had it roped in short order. [Well?], Clay decided to use the hoss, and he won the contest. After the doings was over, Clay offered me 200.00 for the hoss but i wouldn't take that. It wasn't long after that, that some other 4 kids and myself was out a-hunting. We'd tied my hoss up at the camp, and was off in the timber. [hen?] we come back to the camp, my hoss was down with a bullet in his shoulder. I walked and run all the way back to San Antonio, 14 miles, for a veterinarian. He come back with me in his buggy, and whipped the team all the way but we was too late. He cut a '22' bullet out of the hoss's shoulder.

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“Another thing about the ranches, they always kept two or three spoilt hosses on hand to try out new hands. You'd get on 'em like you would a plow hoss, and no telling when he'd come unbuckled. That was lots of fun. Sometimes, a fellow'd get hurt a little, but we was always on hand to help him out of a tight spot.

I remember one green horn that come out to the place looking for a 16 foot hoss that'd been genteeled. [Well?], you wouldn't ask for a better set-up for some fun than that. [?] led out an old, broke down looking hoss for him to try, and he almost turned the hoss down on account of it's looks. [We?] told him to try it, so we'd get an idea what he meant by a 'Genteeled hoss'. [Well?], he got on, and was th'owed off in [less?] time than it takes to tell it. He never did try another hoss under no circumstances, no matter how much we talked, but it was worth it. The cow punchers was fit to be tied, and they wasn't no work that day. They kidded the green horn 'til he left the place. The main give-away was when he asked for a 16 foot high hoss. He should have said a '16 hands high', and that's a big hoss.

“The way we got our hosses for the cow work, was to catch wild ones out on the range. [?] had native Mustangs, and we'd turn a young Cleveland Bay, or a Kentucky Blackhawk stud out with 'em. 5 We'd have to hunt out the old studs first, though, or they'd kill the young ones because they'd be on the young ones before they'd know anything about what was going on.

“The way we caught 'em up, was to let Blackie Edwards, a crack shot, crease 'em. The way that was done, we'd raise the herd and chase 'em for a day, sometimes two or three days, according to the spirit the stud had. You see, the stud always led the mares to the water holes, or everywhere the herd went, and if he had lots of spirit, or was extra cagy, we'd have to chase 'em 'til they was plum run down. After we'd run 'em 'til they was too tired to be cagy, we'd run 'em past Blackie, and he'd shoot the ones we wanted, right in the muscle over the neck. The one on top. That'd numb 'em, and they'd drop like they was

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dead. It wouldn't last but about five minutes, but that was just long enough for one man to hawg tie 'em, and we'd go on 'til we got all the hosses we wanted.

“When we had all we needed, we'd go back to each one, untie him, and one of us would ride him 'til he was partly broke, then we'd go on 'til we had 'em all part broke, then head for the regular hoss corral, or, remuda. [hey?] was a regular hoss wrangler in charge of the remuda, and his job was to break the hosses, and tend to 'em all the time. I liked that job pretty well, but I liked to get around over the range too well to stay put for a wrangler, so I never held the [?] very long at a time.

I was about 10 years old on my first trail drive. Some folks wouldn't call it much trail driving because we didn't run the herd very far, but it was done just like a long trail drive so I just call it a trail drive. [e?] only had two trail drives, and they was both in San Antonio, a 54 mile drive. 6 “The rest of the cattle that was took off the place, went by rail. The railroad put a spur right up to the ranch headquarters so it was [?] easy, and saved a lot of money by [?] that away. Then, too, they was lots less danger of stampedes that away, so it saved money that way too. because you can figure on losing from a dozen to a 100 critters anytime theys a stampede. They'll either run over a cliff, canyon, or some of 'em'll fall and the rest of 'em will stomp 'em down. When a stampede gets under way, you'd better figure on stopping it, and stopping it quick. The quicker it's stopped, the less beef they run off if some of 'em aint kilt. too.

“The way a stampede is stopped, is to have a rider get in front and turn the leader. You see, the herd follers a leader, and if he's turned, you keep turning him 'til the herd is milling around, and going nowhere. They'll soon get tired, and one of 'em will bawl. Talk about a nice sound. The first bawl is certainly welcome because that means that the herd will be stopped still in less than five minutes. That's kind like a wild hoss. If he ever bawls, you got him licked. Of course, the bawl is different from a squeal. [When?] he squeals, that means he's still fighting mad and you'd better not give him a chance to stomp you, or you're a goner.

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“On account of I've got a bad stomach, a left over from the fracas 'Overseas', I'm really as old as a 80, or a 90 year old. I get such pains at times 'til I'll do anything to anybody if they cross me. That's caused me to forget lots of things, and I don't remember so much because of it. After I left the ranch, I was an oil field boomer, working in first one field, then another. Everytime I got a chance, though, I'd enter a contest. Besides riding 7 at Elko, Nevada, I rode here in Fort Worth for nine straight-rodeos. Then, I rode at Mineral Wells, and Rawlings, Wyoming. I rode and roped at these rodeos, and made pretty good money at it because I pretty nearly always finished in the money.

“Since the war, I've worked here and there at different things, but not for long at a time because my stomach goes to tripping me up, and then I have to quit. My main way of making a living now, is a throwback from my hoss riding days. My knack of handling hosses, helped me to train a mule to do anything a mule could be taught. I work for advertising people everywhere with the mule. About the main thing we do, is to work for beer companies. I fix up in a clown suit, and walk down the street with the mule. He'll bow to one side, then another, and by the time we reach a beer joint that handles the beer we're advertising, I holler 'Hey!' at him, and he turns his ear to me. [Then?] I act like I'm whispering something into his ear, and I'll point toward the joint, He'll shake his head up and down, then we'll go inside. This attracts the crowd inside, and we go right up to the bar, where I'll order two bottles of the kind we're advertising. Just set his bottle on the bar, and he picks it up in his mouth, holding on to the neck with his teeth, then empties the bottle. Likes it too. I'd [hate to have to pay for all he could hold?] because he can sure out drink me.